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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Communications Radio-TV Division Washington, DC 20250-1340 (202)720-4330

Letter No. 2625

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Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy addressed the National Association of County Agricultural Agents at its annual meeting in Baltimore, MD. Espy said that in a few weeks the administration will announce plans that will revolutionize USDA and the government. He said the changes will promote more effective delivery of services, and advance the principle of fairness to assure that quality services are available to all. USDA photo by Byron Schumaker.



U.S. AG TRADE SURPLUS -- International trade is playing an increasingly important role in the U.S. economy, and is the economy's major source of growth. Agriculture still maintains its trade surplus, which it has enjoyed for more than 30 years, but the surplus has stalled at around \$18 billion since fiscal 1989. Exports of bulk agricultural products are expected to increase. However, uncertainties cloud the long-term outlook, partly because of a GATT accord, and partly because of development in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. As the world bulk trade grows in the coming years the U.S. can be expected to retain its current market share. With a favorable U.S. exchange rate and continued liberalization in trade policies the U.S. share could rise. **Contact: Stephen MacDonald (202) 219-0822.**

MEAT INSPECTION -- USDA is creating a profile of slaughtering plants failing to meet meat inspection standards, and is compiling a list of plants nationwide that fit the profile. The identified plants will be subject to a special review. The action is part of Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy's directive to the Food Safety and Inspection Service to change and improve the USDA meat inspection system. The FSIS Washington office will receive inspector reports from the field and do follow-up if problems identified in the plants are not addressed. Staff changes have taken place in the field and in Washington. Espy says additional changes could take place if needed. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

WETLANDS POLICY -- The long-term goal of increasing wetland acreage has been affirmed in the Clinton administration's new wetlands policy. Of interest to farmers and ranchers are provisions giving USDA's Soil Conservation Service the authority to decide which agricultural lands are wetlands; establishment of one standard procedure for identifying wetlands using the government's 1987 wetlands manual; expansion of USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program by focusing on voluntary restoration of wetlands on private property; exemption from wetlands regulations former wetlands that were drained and converted to agricultural use; creation of a new appeals process through the Army Corps of Engineers for wetlands development proposals that have been rejected. **Contact: Chris Holmes (202) 720-2156.**

TOBACCO AND THE RURAL ECONOMY -- What will be the impact on the economies of rural tobacco growing areas as U.S. cigarette consumption declines and lawmakers consider further increases in cigarette taxes? USDA's Economic Research Service recently projected the economic impact of a 30 percent decline in tobacco production. The study shows that the impact would be felt most directly by the many individuals who depend on income from tobacco growing, located mostly in the Southern states. It also shows that tobacco farming accounts for a relatively small share of the local economies in most counties where it is grown. The overall impact as a share of total economic activity in tobacco growing areas would be fairly small. **Contact: Cathy Greene (202) 219-0313.**

FRESH FRUIT PRICES -- Another record U.S. apple crop is expected to keep downward pressure on prices. Lower fresh-market apple exports, and higher stocks resulting from sluggish demand in 1992/93 have dropped prices. During the first 6 months of 1993, grower prices for apples averaged 30 percent less, and retail prices were about 10 percent less than the same period a year ago. Total U.S. grape production is forecast down 7 percent this year, and combined with increased demand will strengthen grape prices. A 2 percent increase in pear production and a 4 percent jump in peach production points toward lower prices this year. The 1993 California olive crop is forecast down 30 percent, reducing inventory and raising prices. **Contact: Diane Bertelsen (202) 219-0884.**

CHOLESTEROL AND INFANT FORMULA -- Should cholesterol be added to infant formula? A study of four-month-old infants indicates that they need more cholesterol than commercial formulas provide. Formulas that are based on cow's milk contain less than 25 percent of the cholesterol in mother's milk, and soy-based formulas contain less than 7 percent. Tests at USDA's Children's Nutrition Research Center, in Houston, TX, showed that infants getting low-cholesterol milk made their own cholesterol three times faster than breast-fed infants. Scientists speculate that the high-cholesterol intake infants get from mother's milk may help protect them later in life from diet induced increases in cholesterol. **Contact: William Wong (713) 798-7168.**

HAY AND FEED GRAIN SUPPLIES -- In many States the quality of alfalfa hay for dairy operations has been reduced by excessive rain. Overall supplies of hay for 1993/94 are forecast at 172 million tons, down 3 percent from last year. Feed grain supplies are forecast lower, boosting prices and reducing use in 1993/94. Total feed grain use is expected to decline 3 percent to 240 million tons, while food, seed, and industrial uses are projected to rise due to increased output of fuel ethanol and corn sweeteners. **Contact: Tom Tice (202) 219-0840.**

CORN TAKES A HIT -- Corn production this year is forecast down 22 percent to 7.4 billion bushels. Farmers did not get as much land planted as intended, unfavorable weather will likely increase crop abandonment, and yields will be lower. The national average corn yield is forecast at 116 bushels per acre, down 15 bushels below last year's record. **Contact: James Cole (202) 219-0840.**

BIG BEEF -- Latest figures show that U.S. beef exports totaled a record \$204 million in June. Sales to Japan hit \$135 million, also a record. **Contact: Glenda Sheplar (202) 720-3040.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1890 -- Maria Bynum reports on Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy's mandate to put new safe handling instructions on all raw meat and poultry, and what the labels will mean to consumers. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1372 -- Weather extremes; home flood cleanup; helping flood victims; beefing up meat inspections; safe handling instructions for meat. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1882 -- USDA News Highlights; tobacco and deficit reduction; recourse loans; cattle on feed update; preventing salmonella. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1635 -- Research confirms folk remedies; spice up your life; dietary disease prevention; rust-resistant sunflowers; quest for ancient seeds. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tuesday, September 7, farm production spending, crop & weather update, ag income update; Thursday, September 9, crop production, world ag supply & demand; Friday, September 10, world ag & grain production, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation; Tuesday, September 14, crop & weather update. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on "The New School Lunch," and "College Level Food Safety." DeBoria Janifer reports on the U.S. rice crop. Pat O'Leary reports on pesticide record keeping.

ACTUALITIES -- Bill Teels, USDA Soil Conservation Service, on the new Federal wetlands policy; Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy's remarks at the federation of Southern Cooperatives, and at the annual meeting of National Association of County Agriculture Agents; USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen on the weather and crop situation.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on how to get started in small-scale agriculture; DeBoria Janifer reports on Agriculture in the Classroom workshops.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

WE NEED WARM WEATHER...says **Neil Trobak** (KCIM/KKRL, Carroll, IA). If it arrives the crops will reach predicted yields of over 130 bushels/acre corn and over 30 bushel beans. Daytime temperatures are key. The thermometer is already dropping substantially at night.

SEVERAL EVENTS...are on the broadcast schedule of **Hap Larson** (KBUF, Garden City, KS). Among the many are Fall Field Days, the Old West Fest, and the Southwest Kansas Livestock Classing events. Hap says there have been some problems with insects in corn. Green bugs and corn borer are taking a toll. Wheat planting is underway.

FORMAT CHANGE...has been completed, says **Pam Jahnke-Welch** (WTSO, Madison, WI), from country to news-talk. She has spent a lot of time meeting with listeners and talking about the change. Its going well. Pam says producers need another 60 days of good weather for crop development. If it doesn't arrive they'll use the crops as silage.

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CROPS...in central Michigan are looking spectacular, says **Terry Henne** (WSGW, Saginaw, MI). Sugar beets, potatoes, and corn should provide excellent harvests. Wheat quality, however, is down. Producers use it in rotation, and are seeking new varieties that are more resistant to virus. Terry says that for the past three years his area of central Michigan has been fortunate to provide hay to producers in other regions of the country that were suffering from disasters. This year they've sent hay to the midwest flood area and the southeast drought region.

BLIGHT...is hitting the wheat and potato crops, says **Les Kletke** (Radio Southern Manitoba, Altona, Canada). Due to excessive moisture wheat in his area is suffering head blight, called scab in the U.S., and potato producers are finding late blight. The Canadian Wheat Board will determine if the wheat is a marketable crop. In the "You reap what you sow" category, this item: A few years ago producers in Les' area donated potatoes to Russia to help that country's food situation. This year when the potato blight hit and chemical supplies were depleted, Russia exported a fungicide from its supplies to Canada to help control the blight.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division